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To: Elaine Wynn, President, State Board of Education

From: Nate Hanson, Director, District Support Services

Date: March 9, 2016

RE: Q2 FY17 CSR Variance Report

INTRODUCTION

Pursuant to Nevada Revised Statutes (NRS) 388.700(5), the State Board of Education is required to submit a quarterly Class-Size Reduction (CSR) report to the Interim Finance Committee (IFC) on each variance requested by a school district or charter school during the preceding quarter. The report must include an identification of the elementary school for which a variance was granted, as well as the specific justification for the variance.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Variances at 1- & 2-Star schools have increased by approx. 35% (from 31 to 42) since the last quarter.
- Total classroom variances have dropped by approx. 5% since the last quarter.
- Otherwise, there are no material changes since the prior quarter.

SCOPE OF REPORT

Attached is the report of variances for the first quarter of Fiscal Year (FY) 2017. The report provides a summary of variance requests by school district and charter school and specific variance information by school. For each variance request, the following information is presented for each school:

➤ Type of CSR Program There are two types of CSR programs funded in Nevada:

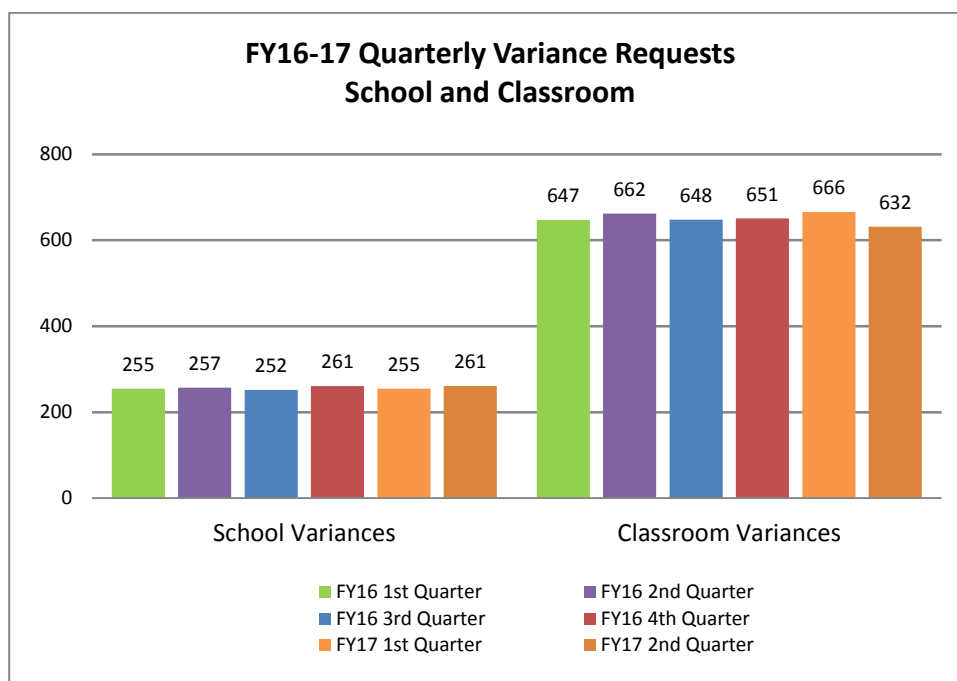
1. Regular CSR: Pupil-teacher ratio; Kindergarten – 21:1; Grades 1 and 2 – 17:1; and Grade 3 – 20:1. This program is currently funded through Sections 15 and 16 of S.B. 515.
2. Alternative CSR: School districts which are located in a county whose population is less than 100,000 may select the Alternative CSR program which provides flexibility in implementing pupil-teacher ratios in grades 1 through 6 for - Kindergarten – 21:1; Grades 1 through 3 – 22:1 and Grades 4 through 6 – 25:1. This program is authorized through NRS 388.720.

- Demographic Data: Low Income (percent of student population eligible for free and reduced priced lunch) and the percent of the student population who are English Learners (EL).
- Achievement Data: Star Rating Pursuant to the Nevada School Performance Framework; and
- Student counts over and under the approved ratios, by grade.

STATEWIDE SUMMARY OF VARIANCES & JUSTIFICATIONS

Variance requests can cite three standard potential justifications: Funding Limitations, Difficulty Hiring Teachers, and Facility Limitations. Any or all of these justifications are accepted, as well as Other (which represents only about 2% of all variance requests statewide).

- The most common variance justification in this quarter remains Funding Limitations, which was a factor in 95.4% and 87.0 % of variances granted to district schools and charter schools, respectively
- Difficulty Hiring Teachers remains the second most common justification in district schools at 93.8%, followed by Facility Limitations at 80.0%. For charter schools, both other factors were much less common, with Facility Limitations at 17.4% and Difficulty Hiring Teachers at 13.0%
- 78.5% of district school variance justifications cited all three rationales, whereas 73.9% of charter school variance justifications cited funding limitations only



SCHOOL LEVEL ANALYSIS OF VARIANCES

To analyze variance data by school, the attached variance report may be sorted by school district, demographic data or by the Star Rating. For example, the attached report has been sorted by Star Rating (one star being the lowest performance rating and five being the highest performance rating). The red boxes identify classrooms over the approved ratio; the number inside the shaded box indicates the number of pupils over.

School Level Variances - Analysis:

In Q2 FY17, the number of school variances has increased by 16 schools compared to Q1 FY17. The number of 1- and 2-Star schools with variances has increased from 31 to 42.

There are seven school districts that continue to have variances in 1 and 2 star schools:

School District	Q2 FY17 Number of 1-and 2-Star Schools with Variances/ Total Eligible Schools
Churchill County School District	2/3 (67%)
Clark County School District	29/217 (13%)
Elko County School District	2/12 (17%)
Nye County School District	5/11 (45%)
Washoe County School District	2/62 (3%)
White Pine County School District	3/4 (75%)
TOTAL	42/359 (12%)

Kindergarten Variance Requests:

Pursuant to Section 32 of S.B. 515, the recommended pupil-teacher ratio for kindergarten is 21:1. If classroom ratios exceed 21:1, the superintendent of the school district may approve variances up to 25:1. Kindergarten classrooms may not exceed a 25:1 ratio, except for remote and rural schools with an approved plan of corrective action. Zero district schools and two charter schools have kindergarten classrooms which exceed the maximum allowable ratios, as indicated in the “Student:Teacher Ratios” column at the far right of the respective summary charts at the end of this report.

Charter School Kindergartens: Variance Requests and Plans for Corrective Action:

Of 43 charter school campuses with full-day kindergarten, 23 are over the 21:1 pupil-teacher ratio and have received governing body approval for these variances up to a 25:1 pupil-teacher ratio. Two charter schools are over the mandated 25:1 ratio limit, and will be required to return any Q2 FDK pre-payments.

2nd Quarter FY17		
School District	Elementary Schools with Variances	Total Classroom Variances
Carson	5	11
Churchill	3	4
Clark	168	462
Douglas	6	15
Elko	6	9
Esmeralda	0	0
Eureka	0	0
Humboldt	1	1
Lander	1	3
Lincoln	2	4
Lyon	9	21
Mineral	0	0
Nye	5	13
Pershing	1	1
Storey	1	3
Washoe	48	82
White Pine	2	3
TOTAL	261 (72%)	632

Funding for CSR at the School District and School Levels:

For FY 2017, Section 16 of S.B. 515 provides that funding for CSR shall pay the salaries and benefits of not less than 1,974 teachers to meet required ratios. CSR provides sufficient funds for school districts to meet required ratios at a school district level. Remaining funds are allocated to the lowest performing schools with variances.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The Department is committed to working with the State Board and school districts/charter schools to decrease the number of variance requests, particularly in high need schools. I hope this information is useful to you; if you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.